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Dec. 1965

[redacted]

DRAFT

NSA Declassification/Release Instructions on File.

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20025

Dear Mr. President:

I want to inform you of my Agency's thinking, ~~based on recent intelligence, concerning~~ three ~~particular~~ aspects of the military situation in Vietnam--the harder fighting by the Viet Cong, the infiltration of Communist reinforcements from the North, and the development of a Chinese military presence in North Vietnam.

First, in recent weeks there has been a gradual increase in the tempo of Viet Cong activity. Not only are the Viet Cong attempting to do more and do it in more places than they have during the past year, but they are more likely to stay and fight if ground is important to them, or if they see an opportunity to hurt us badly. These developments are another step in the gradual evolution of Communist tactics according to classical guerrilla warfare doctrine.

Communist willingness to undertake larger engagements suggests that they see their strength growing at the moment. There is in fact evidence of substantial further infiltration from the North, as well as intensified recruitment inside South Vietnam. [illegible] months

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25X1D1a

four additional North Vietnamese regiments have been identified [redacted] One and possibly two others may also have arrived, and we have identified two additional Viet Cong regiments as well.

The strength of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese regular combat forces in South Vietnam is now believed to total 68,000, including 18 regiments. At one time, the North Vietnamese were used mainly as cadre to stiffen Viet Cong units. Recently, however, North Vietnamese regulars are being formed into composite units of their own. This job is done by the North Vietnamese 325th Division garrison in southern North Vietnam, and the units are probably kept under control of the 325ths "Front" headquarters after they move to the south.

To keep such reinforcements moving, the Communists have undertaken an impressive program to improve roads and tracks in areas of Laos under their control. We have observed the progress of this work by air photography, and our road-watch teams of friendly guerrillas in Laos report that, with the end of the rainy season, vehicles and men are beginning to use the new facilities. In some areas, the Communists are trying to conceal this movement from us by erecting lattice-work camouflage over the road itself. Communist forces in Laos have gone over to the

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offensive in the Panhandle, probably to keep friendly forces away from this activity. 25X1D1a NSA

[redacted] the Chinese Communist military involvement in northern North Vietnam is growing. 25X1D1a NSA [redacted] This applies especially to estimates of Chinese strength. Nevertheless, we believe there could be over 20,000 Chinese engaged in construction, repair, and security duties along the two railway lines which lead northeast and northwest, respectively, from Hanoi to the Chinese border. 25X1D1a NSA

[redacted] any major deployment of Chinese ground combat troops into or even toward North Vietnam. 25X1D1a NSA [redacted] Thus, the Chinese are clearly making a major effort to prepare and hold open a corridor through which war materiel and, if necessary, large bodies of troops, can be poured. 25X1D1a NSA

We do not believe the Chinese have made a decision to enter the war overtly or in force; indeed, we estimate that they will not come in unless Chinese territory or the existence of the North Vietnamese regime is directly threatened. We frankly do not know what the Chinese will do if Hanoi's enthusiasm for continuing the war began to fade;

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[redacted]

can.

My best to Ladybird and the girls,

Love,

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